

HAUNTS OF THE HOMELESS.

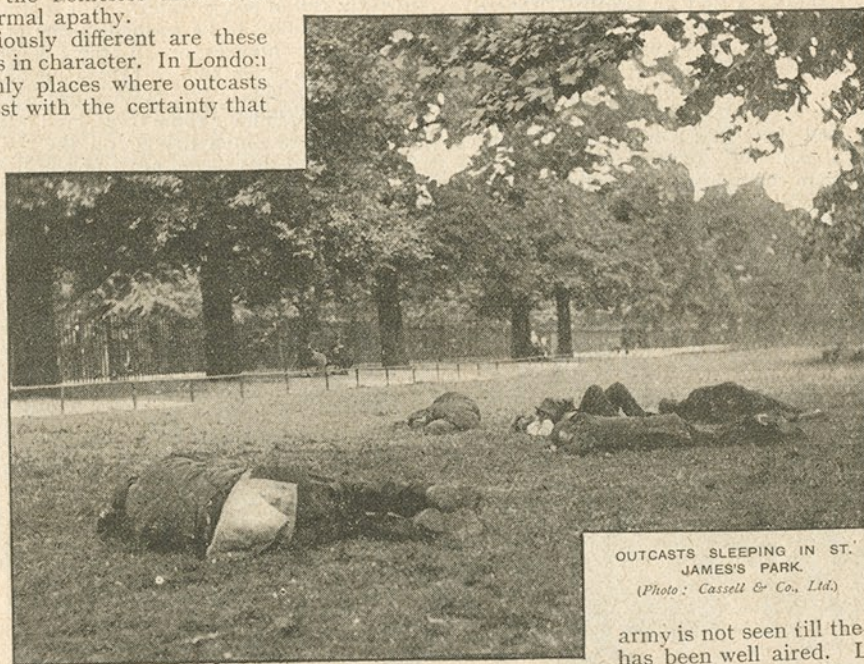
OUTCASTS' RESORTS IN OUR GREAT CITIES.

MAN is a gregarious animal, ever in misfortune. Be his condition what it may, he associates with his fellows; and mainly for this reason the outcasts of big cities have recognised haunts, at some of which they may be found at all times, whether the nation is working or playing, whether it is making merry or mourning for the departed great ones of earth. It takes a great deal to rouse the homeless man from his normal apathy.

Curiously different are these resorts in character. In London the only places where outcasts can rest with the certainty that

undisturbed on one of the seats. He is soon roused and moved on. Only in the parks are the "dossers" allowed to do practically as they please.

Many of the homeless enter those enclosures as soon as the gates are opened, and in the summer scores are scattered about on the grass, fast asleep, by six or seven o'clock, though the full strength of London's vagrant



OUTCASTS SLEEPING IN ST. JAMES'S PARK.
(Photo: Cassell & Co., Ltd.)

they will be free from the delicate attentions of the police are the parks, whereas in the provinces the parks are the only places closed against the homeless—unless, indeed, they "keep off the grass." Nowhere outside the metropolis are swarms of town gipsies allowed to lie on the green sward in a city's "lungs."

For many years the royal parks have been the principal resorts of the London "dossers." At one time a man might, if he chose, remain on the Embankment for twenty-four hours at a stretch; but since a policeman was hoisted over the river wall, and dropped into the malodorous Thames mud—fortunately for him, the tide was out—stricter supervision has been kept over this famous rendezvous of the penniless, and now a man will not sleep long

afternoon and evening, there are hundreds of "dossers" spread over the turf, which is suggestive in parts of a battlefield after the conflict is over and the ground is strewn with dead. It is a saddening spectacle, and yet it seems to make no impression on the average park frequenter, who glances at the groups of prone figures, and then goes on his way unmoved.

There are, however, stranger and more pathetic aspects of "dosser" life in the London parks. Some men spend about eighteen hours of every day in them, entering them at opening time, and never leaving them, except to make forays for food, till shortly before the gates are closed. Occasionally a poor wretch remains in one of the parks all night again.

and again. He eludes the vigilance of the keepers by hiding in an outhouse or a shrubbery while they are making their last rounds, and afterwards curls himself up in the most comfortable corner he can find, certain that he will not be interfered with for some hours.

A draper's assistant, in company with a man who had been "on the doss" for about five years, once spent three successive nights in Hyde Park. On the last occasion he startled his "bedfellow" by suddenly springing up and uttering an exclamation of delight. All at once there had flashed upon him an address—that of an old friend—for which he had vainly cudgelled his brains for a week, so that he might fly there for help in his dire necessity. It was then about two a.m.; but, notwithstanding the early hour, he at once set off across the park, scaled the railings, dropped down on the other side, and started for Highgate.

He arrived at his destination about five o'clock, and there had a weary wait. Three hours dragged slowly on before there was any sign of life in the house. Immediately he was sure somebody was downstairs he rushed to the door and eagerly inquired for his friend. He was gone, and, what was more, the occupier did not know his address!

Sometimes, too, a park gipsy has a strip of rug or carpet to spread on the ground for the purpose of keeping the damp from his ill-

nourished frame. While he is prowling about for food it is either wrapped round his body or else concealed among some shrubs. His equipment may also include a "drum," a can, a brush, a piece of soap, a prehistoric razor, etc.

It is illegal to use soap in the Serpentine, or to perform one's personal ablutions at a drinking fountain. Both things are forbidden by the Parks Regulation Act, 1872. But, with the aid of a bit of rag, and with an apology for a handkerchief as a towel, the "dossier" often makes his toilet in the parks, as anybody may see from the condition of the fountain basins, which in the early part of the day are frequently full of soapy water. Nor is it uncommon for clothes to be washed at one of those public conveniences or in the Serpentine. Cross Hyde Park before breakfast, and you may possibly see a party of nomads—women as well as men—under some trees, and odds and ends of their linen drying on the branches above. And this in the heart of the Empire!

The fact is that hundreds of "dossers" practically live in the parks, where they eat, wash, shave, sleep, mend their clothes—in short, lead a regular nomadic life. In Regent's Park there is a certain patch of sheltered green-sward known to the initiated as the "married quarters," because it is frequented by "couples"; and here there is at times a



A "DOSS" ON THE EMBANKMENT, LONDON.

(Photo: Cassell & Co., Ltd.)

positive air of domesticity. At least one family has been brought up on the ground. It is its "home." Though its members ramble about the street in quest of food, and occasionally accept the hospitality offered at a neighbouring casual ward—where they have been known for more than ten years—they have no other "settlement," no other abiding place on earth, than the patch of land in Regent's Park.

And so wealth and want co-exist side by side in the world's metropolis. Park Lane, with its lordly town houses of multi-millionaires, on the one hand; on the other, only a few score yards away, and easily seen from Dives' draw-

public institutions on one side of the magnificent open space, much of it sitting in the reading-room. Some years back many pitiable wretches used to drive the hours along in the reference library, and it was perhaps for this reason that the issue of prose fiction was stopped there. Novels, at all events, were placed under a ban, and since that the homeless class of "students" have for the most part frequented the adjoining reading-room.

Not long since an unemployed shop assistant spent eight hours a day in this room for nearly three months at a stretch. He



ON THE
INFIRMARY FLAGG,
MANCHESTER.

(Photo:
Castell & Co., Ltd.)

ing-room windows, groups of wretched outcasts scattered over the grass and herding together like the beasts of the field! Truly, London is a city of dreadful contrasts. What significance there is in the circumstance that a good many years ago the officials deliberately set on fire the grass in one of the parks!

In the provinces the principal haunts of the homeless are mostly situated in the streets. The nearest approach to the state of things in the capital is at Glasgow, outcasts lying about the Green much as in the London parks, though in St. Mungo's City they are not allowed so much liberty as in the metropolis.

A good deal of the human wreckage of Liverpool eddies round St. George's Hall—about the Wellington Monument ("sleeping with Wellington" is one of the local terms for having the key of the street), on the flags, and in the gardens. During the winter months an appalling quantity of it resorts daily to the

entered it soon after ten o'clock in the morning, and never left it till six in the evening, when he went out to beg some food and a few coppers for a bed. Not once for ten weeks, during the depth of winter, did he have to remain out all night; but as the weather became milder so the charity of promiscuous almsgivers decreased, and he had more and more difficulty in getting the needful fourpence. In the end, after suffering great privations, he enlisted.

The outcasts of Manchester have a more obvious haunt than those of Liverpool—the Infirmary flagg. This is one of the most remarkable resorts of the homeless in the three kingdoms, being on the fringe of the principal street in Cottonopolis, and in front of the only public building in that city which the stranger cannot miss seeing.

Seats run the whole length of the flags, and these are practically monopolised by the destitute of both sexes, who carry on most of the little operations of life *coram publico*. At one part three or four squalid women suck away in

turn at a villainous-looking clay pipe, which may contain tobacco or only a very indifferent substitute. Plenty of female outcasts such as frequent the flags will smoke brown paper at a pinch. Close by you may see a man wolfing food from a bit of an evening journal, and taking copious draughts at intervals from a black "drum," which he has probably carried over many leagues of the open road. Elsewhere the curious passer-by notices men putting patches on their clothes, knocking down nails in their boots, and doing other jobs, all of them quite indifferent to what the suburban

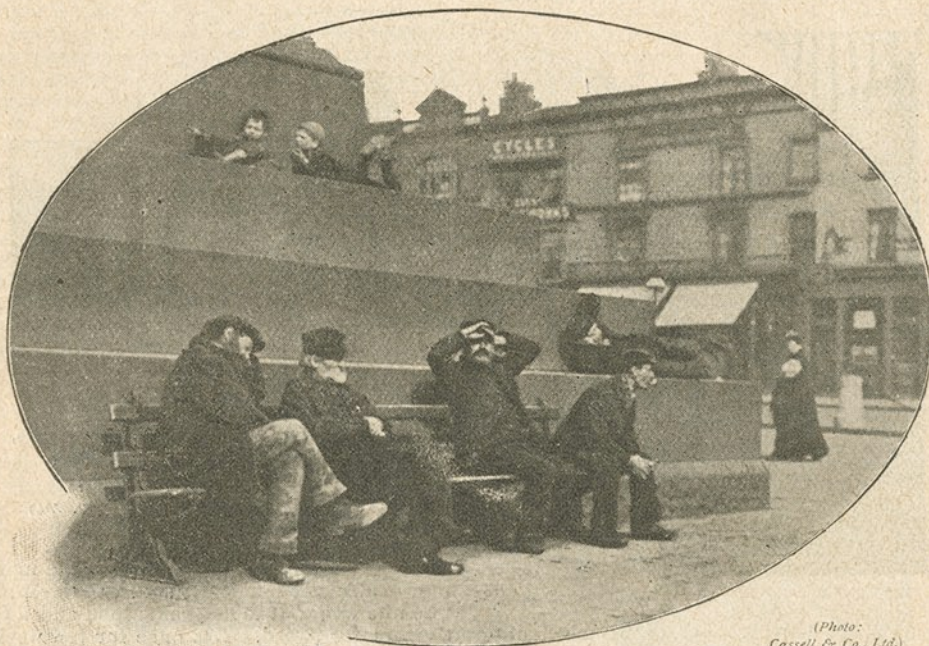
whole night long. This is "sleeping with Oliver Cromwell," and is worse than sleeping on a clothes line.

Taking them altogether, the haunts of the homeless cannot be looked at very closely. The shadows are too deep, the tragedy is too poignant. Relief there is none, for they are strewn thickly with civilisation's failures.

T. W. WILKINSON.

COUNSEL: "Why do you make such foolish answers?"

Witness: "You ask such foolish questions."



(Photo: Cassell & Co., Ltd.)

"BORN TIRED." IDLERS AT THE BASE OF THE WELLINGTON MONUMENT, LIVERPOOL.

householder particularly abominates, "being overlooked." There is no restraint, and the outcasts are not interfered with unless, as sometimes happens, they commit an offence against the common law.

Never are the seats free from vagrants except at night. Then the police keep them clear, waking up and moving on all whom they find on them. Some of the homeless, however, snatch forty winks on them at intervals. Immediately they are cleared off the Infirmary flags, they trudge away to All Saints' Church, drop down there, and promptly fall asleep. Soon they are again set going, whereupon they walk back to the Infirmary, and, after another short nap, once more return to All Saints'. And so they continue to tramp to and fro the

No Other Way.

SOME little while back a darkey in the United States was charged with stealing fowls, and the judge, not wishing to send him to prison, leniently gave him a week in which to pay the fine.

The man protested that he should never be able to raise the money; but nevertheless, on the last day, presented himself and put down the fine.

"You rascal!" said the judge, "I knew you could pay. What did you mean by telling the court you had no money?"

"I not got it then," said the black man; "but judge say, 'Sambo, you pay five dollars or go to prison,' so last night I stole more chicken to pay the fine with!"